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Randolph AFB, Texas



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URESTI FILES BILL PROVIDING PRE-K CLASSES FOR CHILDREN OF ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY

For Immediate Release
Friday, April 21, 2006

SAN ANTONIO -- State Rep. Carlos I. Uresti today filed House Bill 90 to provide pre-K classes to the children of active duty military personnel in the state.

"During a time of war, when military personnel are asked to sacrifice everything for their country, it is our obligation to ensure that their children are taken care of in their absence. Many military parents must leave their kids behind during the early formative years of childhood. While active duty personnel are away, our state should ensure that a solid educational foundation is laid for their children by making pre-kindergarten classes accessible to them," Uresti stated.

House Bill 90 would expand eligibility for free pre-K classes to the children of active duty military personnel, National Guard and Reserve personnel activated for service, and the children of military personnel who are killed, injured or recuperating from injuries sustained during active duty.

"Supporting our military personnel and their families is a bipartisan effort that affects Texans throughout the state" Uresti said. "I am confident that I can count on my fellow legislators to back House Bill 90."

For more information, please call Ryan Sullivan at 512-463-1538 or 512 463-0714.

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Altus AFB, Okla.



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Bucks for BRAC

Local critical infrastructure improvements could be funded

BY MIKE W. RAY
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A measure that would create a "checking account" to help Oklahoma communities "prevent adverse realignment or military base closure" was approved Monday by the state House of Representatives.

Without opposition, the House endorsed Senate Bill 1675, the Oklahoma Military Base Protection Grant Program. The Senate approved a nearly identical version of the same bill last month, also without dissent.

Principal authors of the legislation are Sen. Randy Bass, D-Lawton, and Rep. Don Armes, R-Faxon. Sen. Daisy Lawler, D-Comanche, is a co-author.

The bill would establish a fund "which communities that could be affected by BRAC" could tap for funds, Armes told his colleagues. The federal government would match state dollars at the rate of 3-to-1, up to perhaps 10-to-1, Armes said.

The amount of money that will be available has not been determined yet at either level. The

federal government has not specified how much it will contribute, and SB 1675 involves no appropriation of state tax dollars. The bill is expected to be sent to a House-Senate conference committee for additional refinement.

In the executive budget he submitted to the Legislature earlier this year, Gov. Brad Henry proposed another \$1 million appropriation to the Military Base Closure Fund administered by the state Commerce Department. The Legislature appropriated \$1 million to the fund for the current fiscal year 2006, ledgers show.

The economic benefits provided by established military installations and facilities in Oklahoma — the U.S. Army Field Artillery Center at Fort Sill on the north side of Lawton, Altus Air Force Base, Vance Air Force Base at Enid, Tinker Air Force Base at Midwest City and the Army Ammunition Depot near McAlester — are "significant," SB 1675 says, and those commu-



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nities could be “adversely impacted” by decisions of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

Consequently, the legislation could establish a matching grant program to finance critical infrastructure improvements, to address encroachment issues such as development near a military runway or perimeter fence, for transportation and access needs, utilities, communications, housing, environment and security, “in order to prevent adverse realignment or military base

closure.” The Department of Defense closed 97 major bases and made 55 major realignments after BRAC actions in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995, records show. In preparation for the fifth BRAC round in 2005, the Legislature created the Oklahoma Military Base Closure Prevention Task Force in 2001. On the recommendation of that committee, state lawmakers established the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission in 2003 and allocated \$1.5 million for the Commerce Department to allocate to communities that could be affected by the shutdown of a military installation or realignment of its primary mission.





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History of Vance should be made available to all

Editorial

April 26, 2006

CNHI News Service

— Northwest Oklahoma has a rich history.

That history will be highlighted — as will the entire state of Oklahoma's history — next year during our centennial.

Oklahoma is turning 100 years old next year, and we plan to celebrate in style. Oklahoma Centennial Commemoration Commission has handed out \$16 million across the state for projects geared toward the Sooner State's birthday.

Oklahoma City and Tulsa received \$4 million each from the commission. The other \$8 million was divided up among projects around the rest of the state.

Two Enid projects were among those selected for funding. Museum of the Cherokee Strip will receive \$200,000 to help expand the museum into Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center.

Enid's Air Force Association chapter will receive \$34,000 for the Pioneer Statue aviator's monument to be placed in the headquarters building at Vance Air Force Base.

We are glad to see Enid receive funding for these projects. As the main city to grow out of the Cherokee Strip Land Run, Enid is well-deserving of the money.

Fourteen other northwest Oklahoma projects will receive funding, too.

These projects will be a source of pride for years to come for everyone in the communities that will receive funding.

We hope the celebration of Oklahoma's centennial will spur other projects throughout the area as well. There obviously is not enough money from the centennial commission to fund everything, and that's where communities and individuals need to step forward.

One project we would like to see here in Enid is a museum about Vance.

The statue to be built honoring, among others, the base's namesake, Leon Vance, and space shuttle commander Eileen Collins is a wonderful thing. However, the vast majority of Enid residents won't ever get to see it, except perhaps on special occasions like open houses. The same holds true for the static aircraft displays on base.

The histories of Enid and Vance have been intertwined since Vance was established in 1941.

We hope something can be done to create a museum detailing Vance's history. Now would be the perfect time to plan it. The Air Force is working on extending the base's gates one mile to the north. There are plans for a visitors' center we would like to see expanded so people can learn about the base.

We also hope officials set aside an area so people can view the runways and watch the planes take off and land.

Enid and Vance have a great relationship. We would hope that relationship could be expanded with a museum.

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